



consumer news

Office of Consumer Affairs
Executive Office of the President Virginia H. Knauer, Director

Vol. 3, No. 1, April 1, 1973

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Dear Consumer:

"Sensible shopping makes cents" is a good motto to keep in mind whenever you are shopping. It seems especially true when all of us are trying to feed families within our food budget.

I do not know who used that motto first, but I do know it means the same thing as "Comparison shopping makes sense." First National City Bank in New York sent 2 shoppers to the same supermarket with the same grocery list—but one shopper was to compare prices while the other was not. The result was an \$11.18 difference in their grocery bills. The comparison shopper paid \$25.12 for the similar items for which the other shopper paid \$36.30.

Comparison shopping involves making 5 decisions based on comparisons:

- Compare your own menu possibilities. For example, chicken with dumplings vs. spaghetti with meatballs; squash vs. eggplant.
- Compare prices. Use the unit pricing concept of comparing prices of items in terms of price per ounce, quart or pound.
- Compare size. Consider your needs & storage facilities. Large economy size vs. small size; a half gallon vs. half pint; a dozen vs. 2.
- Compare convenience. For example: grated cheese in a package or pound of cheese that you grate at home; chicken parts or a whole chicken that you cut at home.
- Compare brands. In a Washington store, 2 bags of identical groceries were purchased, but the bag with the nationally advertised brands cost \$9.68 while the same items of the supermarket's house brand cost \$8.47.

So, you see, comparison shopping can be sensible shopping. Sincerely,

Virginia Knauer

Findings of nutrition survey

Health, Education & Welfare Dept. has released the findings of its 10-state nutrition survey. Conducted in New York City & 10 states selected as geographically representative of major areas of the country, the survey involved approximately 40,000 persons—50% of these were 16 years old or younger & 30% were from 17 to 44; the rest were 45 or older. Major findings were

- A significant proportion of the persons studied was malnourished or had a high risk of developing nutritional problems.
- Adolescents between 10 & 16 showed the most evidence of malnutrition.
- Persons over 60 showed evidence of gradual undernutrition—this was not restricted to poor.
- Better the education of the homemaker, better was the nutritional status of the children.
- There was evidence that many persons made poor food choices & poorly used the money they spent on food.

For more information on the nutrition survey, you may want to order a summary of the study's findings entitled *Highlights of the 10-State Nutrition Survey*. Single copies are available free from the Nutrition Program, Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA 30333.

Drugs, television, children

Federal Trade Commission & the television industry have taken new steps to regulate the advertising of over-the-counter drugs.

FTC has issued formal complaints against 3 manufacturers of pain relievers, charging them with false & misleading advertising. Named in the complaints are American Home Products Corp., which makes Anacin & Arthritis Pain Formula; Bristol-Myers Co., which makes Bufferin, Excedrin & Excedrin PM; Sterling Drug Inc., which makes Bayer Aspirin, Bayer Children's Aspirin, Cope, Vanquish & Midol. The cases will now go to administrative law judges for trial. If the judges rule in favor of FTC, it will require the companies to devote 25% of their advertising to corrective statements over the next 2 years.

According to the complaints, the drug companies advertise that their products work better & faster than other aspirin or that their products contain special ingredients.

The FTC complaints were originally proposed nearly a year ago. Since that time, the agency has been negotiating with the drug companies to try to solve the problem. Because the issue has not been resolved, FTC has set hearings & has directed the companies to show cause why they should not be ordered to stop their advertising practices. According to FTC officials, the final outcome of the administrative proceeding—whether in favor of FTC or the companies—could be appealed to the Federal courts.

Concerning all nonprescription drug advertising, National Association of Broadcasters, which represents most television stations, has adopted new rules restricting advertising of these drugs on tv. Effective Sept. 1, the new rules prohibit

- Showing a person taking pills;
- Advertising drugs during programs designed for children;
- Using children in over-the-counter drug commercials intended for adults;
- Broadcasting personal testimonies or endorsements by celebrities;
- Taking an approach to ads in which a casual attitude toward taking drugs is implied;
- Referring to nonprescription drugs as "nonhabit forming" or "nonaddictive."

All 398 stations that subscribe to the NAB code are bound by the rules although there are no penalties for violations of the voluntary rules. Since the 3 networks are also bound by the rules, most of the 372 stations that do not subscribe to the code will, in effect, be following the rules when they are tied into a network.

In a related area, Federal Communications Commission is also looking into the area of television & advertising, especially concerning children's programs. FCC has completed hearings on children's programming & has heard testimony on how children's shows should be financed; how many commercials & what kind of commercials should accompany children's programs; responsible scheduling of children's shows & whether children's programs should be designed for specific age groups.

At present, FCC staff is preparing recommendations based on the outcome of these hearings, which, when completed, will be presented to the commission. The commission will then decide to either issue guidelines for the industry or take other action—such as mandatory rules.

New Federal publications

The following publications are available from Consumer Product Information, Pueblo, CO 81009. Make check or money order payable to Superintendent of Documents, & be sure to include order number when given.

Consumer Products by Design (report on new foods, fabrics & materials from agricultural research), published by Agriculture Dept.; #174A; \$1.25.

Dishwashers (selection, use & care), published by General Services Administration; #001A; 70¢.

Flights & fares

Civil Aeronautics Board has taken new steps to protect the consumer in the area of air travel. These steps include: (1) establishing guidelines governing the advertising of group charters, (2) auditing ticket prices to guard against overcharging & (3) negotiating with other countries over summer rates for transatlantic flights & regulating advertising regarding these rates.

Concerning group charters, CAB has issued new guidelines for information in ads:

- Statement that the price depends on the number of seats sold.
- Minimum & maximum charter prices plus the total service charge. CAB also requires a statement that the minimum price is subject to an increase of no more than 20% as a result of defaults by others & that the charter will be canceled if the charter price increases over this amount.
- Identification of the carrier, type of aircraft or destination point.
- Statement that to be eligible for the charter, the participant must be included on a main or standby list filed with CAB 90 days before the flight.

It also requires that an airline's price & other terms of a proposed group charter must be the same as the rates in effect when the proposed charter contract is filed with CAB; the contract must be filed 15 days before the charter trip is advertised. These steps are to insure that an airline does not try to change the price after the charter is booked.

In the area of ticket prices, CAB has been investigating allegations that airlines are overcharging for tickets, especially in cases where there is a change of planes & airlines. To determine what steps should be taken to solve this problem, CAB has been conducting an audit of prices charged at several airports across the country. According to CAB, the results of this audit will soon be issued.

CAB has also been negotiating with foreign governments over a new summer rate for transatlantic flights. At present, CAB has approved transatlantic fares filed by the 3 U.S. airlines flying to Europe: Trans World Airlines Inc., Pan American Airways Inc. & National Airlines Inc. However, CAB has not approved fares proposed by 4 foreign airlines. Since all airlines flying between the U.S. & Europe must eventually agree on one schedule of summer fares, CAB is continuing its negotiation with foreign airlines. Until the matter is resolved, it has instructed all airlines flying between the U.S. & Europe to sell tickets at 1972 summer levels.

In the meantime, CAB warns consumers to be leery of airlines that advertise low fares "subject to government approval"—meaning CAB approval. CAB says its final decision on summer fares will not necessarily mean approval of those fares being advertised now.

For further information on fares, write to Office of Consumer Affairs, Civil Aeronautics Board, Washington, DC 20428. For further information on group charter guidelines, write to Supplementary Services Division at CAB. For a free copy of the booklet *Air Travelers' Fly-Rights*, write to Publications Services Section at CAB.

Recall report

Food & Drug Administration ordered the recall of all canned mushroom products manufactured by Fred Mushroom Products Co. of South Lebanon, OH, after botulism was discovered in a set of sample cans. Recall began Feb. 22, & most recalled products were to be off grocers' shelves by April.

Recalled products include retail & industrial-sized cans of sliced whole mushrooms, mushroom stems & pieces, steak sauce & mushrooms & brown gravy. All sell under the Fred's label. Also involved in the recall are canned mushroom pieces & sliced mushrooms manufactured for the following private labels: Fame, Sentry, Deerwood, Depaolo & Niehaus.

According to FDA officials, the recalled products were all produced at the company's plant in South Lebanon during the past 4 or 5 months. Mushroom products manufactured at other company plants have not been recalled: Fred's fresh mushrooms, frozen mushrooms, mushrooms packed in glass & all sizes of button or whole mushrooms.

Progress report: food labeling

Food & Drug Administration has entered the second stage of its food labeling program by taking actions to clarify the common or regular name for many food products & by establishing nutritional quality guidelines for certain classes of food.

FDA has issued 5 regulations affecting the common name for food products:

- A final order requiring diluted orange juice product labels printed after Dec. 31, 1973, to contain a statement of the percentage of real juice on the front panel, directly under the brand name & common name for the product. According to Virginia H. Knauer, Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, this order fulfills "a commitment made to me & American consumers 2 years ago." As a result of this action, she added "consumers need not rely on color, simulated pulp or confusing names of watered juice products any longer."
- A final order requiring a statement of the percentage of fish in seafood cocktail. Like the regulation governing orange juice products, this statement must appear directly under the brand & common names for product. Order applies to seafood cocktail labels printed after Dec. 31, 1973.
- A proposed regulation requiring "drinks" that do not contain real fruit juice to make a statement to this effect on the front panel, directly under the brand & common names for the product. According to FDA officials, many drinks are represented as containing natural fruit juice either through their coloring or their labeling. If the proposed regulation goes into effect, it would require a drink represented, for example, as containing orange juice to contain a statement saying "does not contain orange juice."
- A proposed regulation that would require the producer of packaged main dishes, such as a chicken casserole, to state on the label that the chicken is missing from the product, when such is the case, & must be added by the consumer.
- A proposed regulation that would require the makers of frozen dinners to state what foods, if any must be served with the product in order to make a nutritionally balanced meal.

Concerning frozen dinners, FDA has also issued a final regulation setting up its first set of voluntary nutritional guidelines for a class of foods. According to FDA officials, nutritional guidelines—which prescribe certain levels of protein, vitamins & minerals—are designed to eliminate possible promotional advantages that a manufacturer might hope to gain by fortification of foods. Overfortification of vitamins, FDA officials explained, could be harmful, especially in the cases of vitamins A & D. Under the regulation, manufacturers using the guidelines will be allowed to label their products as follows: "This product provides nutrients in amounts appropriate for this class of food as determined by the U.S. Government."

CONSUMER NEWS is published the 1st & 15th of each month by the Office of Consumer Affairs, Health, Education & Welfare Dept., to report Federal Government programs for consumers. Use of funds for printing this publication approved by the Director of the Office of Management & Budget, May 15, 1972. Authorization to reproduce any or all items is granted. Editorial address is CONSUMER NEWS, Office of Consumer Affairs, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20506; telephone: (202) 395-4692. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; subscription \$2 a year, payable to Supt. of Documents. Send changes of address to Superintendent of Documents.

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE:1973-516-055/20

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20506

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Consumer News: April 1

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